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ABSTRACT

Despite research conducted on the testing of minorities, little attention has been given to the issue of the race and training of the test administrator, i.e., the psychometrist or school psychologist. Black children in the present educational system are most often faced with examiners who are culturally, socially, and economically different from themselves. These differences undoubtedly create problems of rapport and may be the cause of disproportionate numbers of black children being identified as educable mentally retarded. There is great inequity in the access to professional training and equal employment for blacks in the field of school psychology. In order to train more blacks as school psychologists and to provide more comprehensive testing of children and youth, the following recommendations might be followed: (1) the implementation of affirmative action hiring programs for school psychologists; (2) Federal efforts to correct underrepresentation of blacks; (3) the development of school psychology programs by black colleges and universities; (4) the consideration of a broader range of data for psychological assessment; (5) improved training of school psychologists, including an unbiased orientation to the cultural characteristics of the students they will be evaluating; and (6) improved access of blacks to graduate programs in predominantly white institutions. (Author/GC)

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Who is Testing Black Children and Youth In the Public Schools of America?

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This paper was presented at the Tenth Anniversary of the Black Child Institute, held in Washington, D. C. on October 31, 1980. It is presented to the readers to share the status of who is testing Black children and youth as we face the 1980's.

Despite the volumes of research and attention given to the testing of minorities, very little or no attention has been given to the issue of the race and training of the test administrator, i.e., psychometrist, school psychologist or psychological worker. These individuals play the most important role in the administration and interpretation of psychological and standardized tests. Their role is critical and powerful in the assessment, identification and placement of literally thousands of black children and Youth in special education classes. The identification of educable mentally retarded children and youth is based for the most part upon tests of intelligence, administered by school psychologists. Dunn (1968) points out the important role in the assessment of youth:

> The assessment of educational potential has been left to the school psychologist who generally adrinisters- in an hour or so - a psychometric battery, at best consisting of individual tests of intelligence, achievment and social and personal adjustment. Again, the purpose has been to find out what is wrong with the child in order to label him and thus make him eligible for special education services. In large measure this has resulted in digging the educational grave of many racially and/or economically disadvantaged children by using a WISC or Binet IQ score to justify the label "mentally retarded." This term has become a destructive self-ful filling prophecy."

The labeling of literally thousands of black children as educable mentally retarded places a stigma on the child which he/she will wear for a life time.

Wright and Isenstein (1975) point out one of the most devastating results of misclassification and labeling is that " children who are misclassified and labeled as 'different' may be permanently stigmatized and may experience rejection by those in the immediate environment.

Although interest has been vigorous and widespread in reviewing, assessing and identifying the shortcomings of assessment instruments for minorities, there are no studies that address the apparent issue of the tremendous underrepresentation of blacks in the field of school psychology. There is clearly a gross inequity in the access to professional training and equal employment for blacks in this field. Consequently, black children and youth are most often faced with an examiner who is perceived by the the child as culturally, socially, and economically different. Rapport problems are postulated, especially when the examinee is black and the examiner is white (Williams, 1970). Other studies point to some evidence that the examiner can have a negative effect on the test scores of black examinees (Katz, 1964; Katz and Benjamin, 1960; Pasamanick and Knoblock, 1955; Katz and Greenbaum, 1963; Canady, 1936; and Johnson, 1979).

The purpose of this article is threefold:

- to review and identify the number of white and black school psychologists employed in the public schools of America
- to review and analyze the degree to which blacks have access to professional programs (schools) in School Psychology leading to certification and licensing to practice as a school psychologist
- to present specific recommendations for the inclusion of blacks in more representative numbers in relation to the total black population in public schools

Research Model

The researcher reviewed, examined and assessed available literature and publications on the subject of school psychology. There was a complete absence of any literature on the number of blacks in the field of school psychology. In

addition to the literature review, further data on the subject were gathered from (1) entry level requirements for states certifying school psychologist, (2) the American Psychological Association Guide to Graduate Programs in Psychology, (3) the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and (4) a survey sent to Black Colleges and Universities.

Findings

- In a report of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (1976), compiled from the Elementary and Secondary Staff Information Report - EEO - 5, there were 472 black school psychological workers and 10,224 whites in the public schools of this country. Black representation is a little more than 2% of the total number. A careful review of the state-by-state statistics reveals that there is absolutely no parity in the number of blacks in any state or region of the country.

- A review of the entry level requirements for school psychologists in some states eliminates many blacks from entering this field. The states of Georgia, Indiana, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Texas and Wyoming require a doctorate for certification. This trend will continue in the near future as the American Psychological Association has recommended the doctoral degree as the minimal entry level requirement for using the title "psychologist."

- There are limited opportunities for blacks to enroll in programs in school psychology, educational psychology, or clinical psychology which leads to certification in school psychology. A survey of all four-year and graduate colleges and universities reveal that only four historically black institutions offer programs in school psychology: Fisk University, Howard University, Virginia State University and Virginia Union University.

Of these four institutions, only three are listed by the American Psychological Association as offering School Psychology programs.

- School psychology certifcation requirements require at least a minimum of a master's degree. Most of the Historically Black Institutions are undergraduate degree granting institutions.

- To qualify for certification, black students are required to compete for limited space in programs at Traditionally white institutions. A review of institutions which offer school psychology programs and are listed in the Guide to Graduate Programs in Psychology, there is a break-down of non-caucasians. Non-caucasians comprise about 1% of the number of students accepted to first year programs during the 1979-1980 school year. It is safe to conclude that blacks have limited access to graduate programs in school psychology at Traditionally White institutions.

To answer the question of Who is testing black children and youth in the public schools of America, it is clear that caucasians comprise the significant majority of school psychologists and psychological workers. Additional answers to the topic in question can be found in the status of black involvement in testing:

- Blacks have no parity in employment as school psychologists in any region of this country;
- Blacks have been and continue to have little or no access to professional programs which lead to certification and licensing as a school psychologists;
- Historically Black Institutions do not offer degree programs in all institutions in school psychology;
- Black children and youth are disproportionately assessed, identified and placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded;
- Statistics suggest that black children are being assessed by examiners who do not represent their role models, i.e., parents, teachers, counselors and administrators.

Recommendations

After reviewing and surveying the current issue of 'Who is Testing Black Children and Youth in the Public Schools of America," there are some recommendations to include blacks in the field of school psychology and implement more comprehensive testing of children and youth:

- School districts in every state need to develop and implement an affirmative action plan to address the severe underepresentation of blacks in psychological workers' jobs
- The Office for Civil Rights and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission need to intrusively pursue corrective action with the many school districts across the country for the underrepresentation of blacks in these fields.
- Black colleges need to develop school psychology programs as a priority for their Schools of Education and Departments of Psychology. This is urgently needed in view of the increasing number of black children and youth who are being tested and placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded.
- Assessments of all children and youth should include the following areas:
    a. Language Development/Language Dominance Data
    b. Educational Assessment Data
    c. Sensory-Motor Assessment
    d. Adaptive Behavior Data
    e. Medical and/or Developmental Data
    f. Vocational assessment Data
    g. Intellectual Assessment Data
    h. Observational Data gathered from observations in the classroom, on the school yard and in the community
    i. Parent information on perceptions and observations
- Psychological workers should be given intensive orientation to the type of student body they will be serving. As a part of the orientation, each worker should go through intensive non-discriminatory assessment training.
- Institutions that train school psychologists need to seriously review, revise and implement curricula that prepares all individuals to deal with the appropriate, non-biased and comprehensive evaluation of children and youth in black communities
- Traditionally White Institutions need to provide more access or encourage minority (black) admissions to school psychology programs

Conclusion

As we continue into the 1980's, black children and youth face many barriers in becoming healthy individuals. Statistics gathered by the Office for Civil Rights for the 1978-1979 school year on Blacks in Special Education programs paint a dismal picture that more children and youth are being assessed, labeled and placed in classes for the educable mentally retarded than in previous reports. Schools are performing a major function of society in sorting, selecting and identifying those individuals at any early age who will not be able to compete and survive the hard days ahead. Through the excessive and limited evaluations of children, schools have continued to identify a massive and shocking number of individuals who are and will be controlled and be at the mercy of the State. Ignoring the current issue of testing and its effect on thousands and perhaps millions of individuals will certainly perpetuate a larger underclassing of blacks in this country.

FOOTNOTES

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